

**REMARKS
AFFORDABLE HOUSING CONFERENCE
FEBRUARY 25, 2002**

THANKS FOR INVITING ME TO SPEAK TO YOU TODAY.

**THAT'S ONE OF THE FEW BENEFITS OF BEING PRESIDENT
OF THE COUNCIL. YOU GET TO GIVE A FEW MORE
SPEECHES, SIGN YOUR NAME TO PROCLAMATIONS, AND
GET TO CAPTAIN ONE OF THE TEAMS AT OUR POST
BUDGET SOFTBALL GAME.**

**BUT ONE OF THE REALLY IMPORTANT 'POWERS' OF THE
COUNCIL PRESIDENCY IS THAT I GET TO PICK TOPICS
FOR THE COUNCIL'S FEATURE NEWS PROGRAMS THAT
ARE AIRED ON THE COUNTY GOVERNMENT CABLE
CHANNEL. MY FIRST CHOICE FOR A PROGRAM WAS ONE
ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING. AND, I SWEAR BARBARA
GOLDBERG-GOLDMAN, NORMAN DREYFUS AND TAD**

BALDWIN HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THE FACT THAT THIS WEEK IT AIRS FOR THE VERY FIRST TIME.

WHEN WE TALK ABOUT AFFORDABLE HOUSING, MOST OF US THINK OF PEOPLE WHO ARE POOR—AS WE SHOULD. BUT I WAS STRUCK BY A RECENT REPORT FROM THE WASHINGTON AREA HOUSING PARTNERSHIP AND COG. HOMEOWNERSHIP IS OUT OF REACH, NOT JUST FOR THE POOR, BUT FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS, FIRE FIGHTERS, AND POLICE OFFICERS. AND MANY OF THEM CANNOT EVEN AFFORD TO RENT A TWO-BEDROOM APARTMENT AT TODAY’S AVERAGE RENTS—ASSUMING THEY COULD EVEN FIND ONE WITH OUR LOW VACANCY RATES. LOW-WAGE EARNERS, SUCH AS CHILDCARE STAFF OR RETAIL ASSOCIATES, WOULD HAVE TO SPEND OVER 2/3 OF THEIR INCOME TO RENT A TWO-BEDROOM APARTMENT.

THIS QUALIFIES AS A CRISIS AND WE MUST ACT NOW.

**WHEN I THINK OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING, I THINK OF
THE THREE ‘WHERE’S’: WHERE CAN WE FIND THE FUNDS;
WHERE CAN WE FIND THE LAND; AND WHERE CAN WE
FIND THE WILL.**

**THANKS TO THE LEADERSHIP OF DOUG DUNCAN AND
THE COUNTY COUNCIL, LAST SPRING WE MORE THAN
DOUBLED FUNDING FOR THE HOUSING INITIATIVE FUND
TO \$15 MILLION PER YEAR. WITH THOSE FUNDS WE CAN
HELP THE YOUNG ADULT WITH DEVELOPMENTAL
DISABILITIES TO LIVE INDEPENDENTLY, WITH
ASSISTANCE FROM THE JEWISH FOUNDATION FOR
GROUP HOMES. WE CAN HELP THE WORLD WAR II
VETERAN TO LIVE WITH DIGNITY AT VICTORY**

HOUSING'S ANDREW KIM HOUSE IN OLNEY. AND WE CAN HELP THE FAMILIES AT BLAIR PARK APARTMENTS IN SILVER SPRING LIVE IN VASTLY IMPROVED APARTMENTS THANKS TO THESE FUNDS AND MONTGOMERY HOUSING PARTNERSHIP.

NOW COMES AN EQUALLY DAUNTING CHALLENGE—ACTUALLY GETTING MORE AFFORDABLE HOUSING BUILT. THE HOUSING POLICY WE HAVE ADOPTED SAYS WE SHOULD BE CREATING OVER 1,000 NEW AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS PER YEAR, DOUBLE WHAT WE ARE DOING NOW. A LARGE PIECE OF THAT PUZZLE IS WHERE TO FIND THE LAND. WELL, IF POLITICS IS THE ART OF THE POSSIBLE, THEN LET'S EXPAND THE POSSIBILITIES. I BELIEVE ONE PLACE TO FIND THE LAND IS US.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY OWNS THOUSANDS OF PIECES OF LAND THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY. SOME ARE FORMER

SCHOOL SITES, NO LONGER NEEDED BY THE SCHOOL SYSTEM. SOME ARE SURFACE PARKING LOTS. JUST THIS PAST YEAR VICTORY HOUSING RECEIVED APPROVAL TO BUILD SENIOR HOUSING ON A FORMER SCHOOL SITE IN POTOMAC.

WE CAN NO LONGER RELY ON OUR MPDU PROGRAM. IT JUST WON'T CREATE ENOUGH AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS PER PROJECT. WE NEED TO LOOK AT PARTNERS LIKE HOC, MHP, VICTORY HOUSING AND OTHERS AS 'DEVELOPERS OF CHOICE' TO CREATE THOSE UNITS. WORKING WITH THESE PARTNERS, WE CAN DO BETTER AND WE NEED TO START NOW.

SO, TODAY I AM CALLING ON OUR COUNTY GOVERNMENT TO MOVE FORWARD IN THE NEXT

6 MONTHS TO IDENTIFY THE BEST SITES AND THE BEST PARTNERS AND MEET OUR COMMITMENT TO CREATE NEW HOUSING FOR OUR COMMUNITY.

BUT THERE WON'T BE EASY CHOICES EVEN WITH FUNDING. WHERE DO WE FIND THE WILL?

EVERY TIME WE DEBATE THE LOCATION OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING, ISSUES ALWAYS ARISE ABOUT WHETHER A PARTICULAR SITE IS APPROPRIATE. BUT IF WE ARE GOING TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF HOMES AND APARTMENTS THAT ARE AFFORDABLE FOR OUR COMMUNITY, WE MUST MAKE THE CHOICE IN FAVOR OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING.

JUST THIS MONTH DURING THE COUNCIL'S REVIEW OF THE POTOMAC MASTER PLAN, WE SAW THIS PLAY OUT.

PARK AND PLANNING HAD RECOMMENDED FOR ACQUISITION 3 FORMER SCHOOL SITES FOR PARKLAND OR RECREATION USE ONLY. DERICK BERLAGE AND I LED THE EFFORT ON THE COUNCIL TO KEEP OPEN THE OPTION THAT THESE SITES COULD BE USED FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING. THE FINAL VOTE IS NEXT WEEK AND I THINK WE WILL PREVAIL. I TELL YOU THIS NOT BECAUSE DERICK AND I WANT A PAT ON THE BACK BUT TO REMIND US ALL OF HOW MUCH WORK REMAINS TO BE DONE. THIS DECISION AND THE DECISIONS ABOUT WHAT TO DO WITH PUBLICLY OWNED LAND WILL BE, IN MY OPINION, THE ACID TEST OF OUR REAL COMMITMENT TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN THIS COUNTY. I PLEDGE TO YOU THAT AS LONG AS I REMAIN ON THE COUNCIL, THIS IS A TEST WE SHALL NOT FAIL.

I WANT TO BRING YOU BACK TO THE TV PROGRAM I MENTIONED EARLIER. IF YOU WATCH IT, LISTEN ESPECIALLY TO JUAN FLORES WHO, THANKS TO MONTGOMERY HOUSING PARTNERSHIP, HAS BEEN ABLE TO BUY A HOME NEAR CONNECTICUT AVENUE IN WHEATON. IN THE SHOW HE IS STANDING IN FRONT OF A BEAUTIFUL, RENOVATED HOME, A HOME THAT IS HIS. AND YOU HEAR HIM SAY, “WE’VE REACHED THE AMERICAN DREAM. WE HAVE A HOME.”

SOMETIMES WE FEEL OVERWHELMED ABOUT THE ENORMITY OF THE CHALLENGE IN FRONT OF US. THERE ARE MANY RESIDENTS OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY, WHO THANKS TO YOU, HAVE REACHED THE AMERICAN DREAM. BUT LET’S REMEMBER THAT THERE ARE THOUSANDS MORE JUAN FLORES OUT THERE WHO HAVE NOT. LET’S NOT LET THEM DOWN. THANK YOU.

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